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ABSTRACT

Canadian families differ from one another to the degree that it is now customary for researchers, helping professionals, teachers, and others to declare their interest in families, not "the family." The proliferation of different family forms has led some, who disregard the fact that the traditional family has had a very brief history, to lament the decline of family and the erosion of true family values. While modern families are structurally diverse, they function in the traditional way as the primary places where persons care for each other; produce, consume, and distribute goods and services; and try to satisfy family members' emotional needs. What is truly notable about today's family is the proportion of young women with children who have entered the labor force or remained in the labor force while their children are young. Several considerations suggest that women are in the labor force to stay. Increasingly under pressure, the family is no longer a refuge, but has become a zone from which members seek refuge in individual pursuits. To respond to the needs of families in the 21st century, Canadians will have to recognize and respect the diversity of family forms and be sensitive to the particular circumstances of families which they seek to help and support. (RH)

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TODAY'S FAMILIES: CONTINUITY, CHANGE & CHALLENGE

Keynote Address on the Occasion of the
50th Anniversary of the
Canadian Home Economics Association

by

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July 7, 1989

There are many assumptions about families that many of us take for granted. Many have assumed that there is this singular, homogeneous, static thing called THE CANADIAN FAMILY. Many have assumed that the single-parent family is an invention of the 1970's and an unintended consequence of what Saturday Night has pejoratively labelled as the "F" word, feminism. Many have assumed that there is an epidemic of adolescent pregnancy. We have now grown accustomed to thinking of family life as more of a societal problem and liability to individuals than as the rhetorical cornerstone of society and foundation of identity it was once thought to be. We assume, often on the basis of good but incomplete evidence, that family life involves essentially unhappy marriages, separations, divorces, the abuse and exploitation of women, children and old people, intractable conflict between the generations. Families are often portrayed as no more than the places that women and children run from to find safer places to be and from which men flee in order to escape their responsibilities. We have assumed that everything about family is in a state of flux and that nothing is constant.

Yet, our assumptions about families can and do, like any other assumptions when taken-for-granted, distort our views and ideas about families at least as much as they illuminate some dimensions of the family lives of some Canadians. The dangers of relying on such taken-for-granted assumptions are illustrated by a story that I first heard told by Dr. Lois Wilson, Past-Moderator of the United Church of Canada. The story concerns a 65 year old man who, having recently moved from one community to another, was being examined for the first time by his new family physician. As is the custom, the doctor started his examination with a number of questions about the man's medical and family history.

"Tell me," asks the doctor. "How old was your father when he died?"
"Did I say my father had died?" responds the patient.
"No. I guess you didn't," says the doctor.
"I'm terribly sorry. I suppose I just took it for granted. How old is your father?"
"Well," said the patient. "He's 85 and in very good health."
"Excellent," replies the doctor. "Perhaps you can tell me, then, how old your grandfather was when he died."
"Did I say my grandfather had died"
"No. Again, I just took it for granted" replied the doctor somewhat flustered. How old is your grandfather?
"He's 105. And, as a matter of fact, he's just been married for the second time."
"Amazing," says the doctor. But, why would a man of his age want to get married again?"
"Did I say he WANTED to get married?

Without wanting to diminish what we might call the "down side" of family life - the conflict, divorce, violence against women and children - it is important to remember that, for better or worse, the majority of Canadian marriages do last for a lifetime. Despite a recent drop in marriage rates, it remains a popular institution - so popular that many Canadians marry 2 or 3 times. And, the most likely consequence of divorce remains remarriage although rates of remarriage remain higher for men than for women and there has been a recent decline in remarriage rates. Marriage does not, as perhaps it once did, necessarily imply a willingness or desire to bear and raise children. There have been notable increases in the rates of cohabitation and intentional childlessness. Canadians do, according to attitude surveys, say that their family relationships represent the most important dimension of their lives. When asked by Gallup or Decima or whoever, we customarily declare that our families are more important to us than our jobs, salaries, political convictions and religious commitments. Needless to say, these responses actually tell us more about the people we would like to be than about the people we are and the behaviours we practice.

The vast majority of young adults hold strong and quite traditional aspirations for their own family futures - most tell us that they expect to marry (ONLY ONCE) and that they hope and expect to have at least two or three children. Only 4 in every 1000 young people tell us that they expect to experience divorce even though present trends would indicate that 396 of them are too optimistic. This optimism has been maintained by these young people despite the fact that a very large minority of them have already experienced the divorce of their parents and, in turn, a majority of those who have experienced divorce have also lived with a step-parent.

Although the latest official figures reveal that 43% of all statistics are totally worthless, a comparison of a few facts about 1939, the year of the founding of the Canadian Home Economics Association, and about the present are interesting and reveal both patterns of stability and change. As we all know, the average number of people in Canadian households has declined in the last fifty years; using the famous statistical concept of the partial person, the decline has been from 4.4. to 2.8 people per household. Related to this decline in household size are: the aging of the population and the decline in fertility. In 1939, the median age of the population was 26.6 years and it had risen to 31.5 years by 1986. The average life expectancy in 1939 was 63 for men and 66.3 for women; by 1984, these had risen to 72.7 for men and 79.7 for women. One of the most dramatic changes of the last fifty years (and one that has contributed substantially to the increases in life expectancy) is the reduction in infant mortality from 61/1000 births to 7.9/1000 in 1985.

It is often assumed that our society is aging because we live longer, but, in fact, increases in average life expectancy play a very, very small part in the overall process of societal aging. The only significant reason accounting for societal aging is the proportionate decrease in the number of young people brought about by declining rates of fertility. In 1939, the total fertility rate was 2.7 and today, women bear, on average, 1.7 children during their reproductive years. Women and men have effectively taken control over their reproduction and, like the people of practically all industrialized nations, have chosen to bear fewer children than are necessary to replace themselves. Shortly after the turn of the century, more Canadians will die every day than are born and the role of immigration in sustaining a stable population base will grow increasingly important; the multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic character of some Canadian communities will become more pronounced and such changes will pose significant challenges as educational, health and social service systems adapt to them.

There is no epidemic of adolescent pregnancy. It is true that in comparison to 1939 when only 3.9% of births were to unmarried women, the proportion of 16.7% calculated in 1984 shows a dramatic increase in births to single women. But, we do need to recognize that the rates of both pregnancy and childbearing among adolescents has been declining in recent years and that the increase in births to unmarried women reflects far more the behaviours and decisions of women between 20 and 35 years of age who may or may not be involved in stable cohabiting relationships. The illusion that Canada has an epidemic of adolescent pregnancy has been fuelled far more by three quite different factors: first there is what I might call free trade in American statistics; second, there has been a tremendous decrease in the number of shotgun marriages; and, third, a remarkable increase in the number of young women who, once having borne a child, choose to raise the child themselves rather than give the baby up for adoption.

In addition to unmarried motherhood, it is separation, divorce and death that are the avenues toward lone-parenthood. Fifty years ago, more than 12.2% of Canada's families were headed by a single parent and the comparable figure in 1986 was 12.7%; back then, approximately 10% of children were, at any one time, living with a lone parent while today approximately 14% of children do so. Of course, in 1939, approximately 70% of lone parents were widows or widowers while today almost 2/3's of lone-parents have been separated, divorced or unmarried at the time of birth. Still, it is important to recognize that: single

parenthood within our society is not novel; that approximately 1/3 of our single parents are widows or widowers; that lone parenthood is not the product of the 1970's and feminism; and, that our society has in the past met the challenge to collectively support lone-parents and their children.

Last but not least, one of the most dramatic differences between the founding year of your association and the present is the dramatically-increased participation of women in the paid labour force. In 1939, some 18% of women held paying jobs while today, 60% of all women do so.

This mess of facts, figures and trends cannot provide a portrait of the Canadian family. In place of a singular representation, we see more a gallery of diverse images. Families differ from one another by virtue of: their structures and the characteristics and capacities of their members; their heritages of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic traditions; their socio-economic resources and circumstances and the ways in which they divide responsibilities among members to ensure economic survival or prosperity; the ages of their members; and, the characteristics of the communities, locations and regions in which they live.

Despite this diversity of family forms and the diversity of patterns of family functioning, many individuals, organizations and governments continue to labour under a taken-for-granted picture of so-called "traditional family life."

We carry with us from the 1950's that image of family life as it was portrayed through popular culture in FATHER KNOWS BEST, and as it was nostalgically remembered in HAPPY DAYS. These programs and perhaps our own recollections lead us to take it for granted that the traditional family was composed of two parents, a male breadwinner who worked for wages in the marketplace, his wife and their children to whom she devoted almost all her time and energies. This family drove a station wagon because it left enough room in the back for Spot, the dog.

Today, in contrast to this straightforward image of what family should look like and should behave like, we have the plurality of images of family life as portrayed on television in such series as:

WHOSE THE BOSS? (ex male athlete employed as housekeeper/nanny by successful female advertising executive);

MY TWO DADS (who inherit jointly the custody of a teen-age girl when her mother dies and paternity is unclear-definitely not a show of the 50s);

FULL HOUSE (three young men sharing responsibility for the child of the one who is a widower);
KATE AND ALLIE (two divorced single mothers sharing a home not just for economic reasons but for companionship and intimacy);
OUR HOUSE (a widow lives with her children in her father-in-laws' house); and,
GROWING PAINS (househusband to media personality who does a little psychiatry on the side to earn some pin money).

And, of course, last but not least, there are the Keatons and the Huxtables of FAMILY TIES and THE COSBY SHOW who, in fact, are the closest approximations we have in the 80s to the conventional nuclear family of the 50s. But, even with these shows the conventions have changed significantly. In each, the husbands play the somewhat endearing fools while it is the Mothers who know best but more significantly, these are both dual wage-earning families thereby confirming that it is this form of family functioning that has become the statistical norm in these days of women's labour force participation. (Curiously, even though the Keatons and Huxtables have four professional careers between them which certainly provide the wherewithal to support a comfortable life, their careers seldom seem to get in the way of family fun to the same extent as do the careers of most of the dual-earner families I know).

It is now customary for researchers, helping professionals, teachers and others to declare their interest in families, not THE FAMILY. Today, it is what families DO rather than what they look like that provides us with a basis from which to acknowledge that single wage-earning families, dual wage-earning families, blended families, extended and three-generation families, single-parent families are all variations on a common familial theme. In the midst of all this diversity are the needs and aspirations and responsibilities that are common to all families, regardless of form. No matter what they look like, families are the primary places where we care for each other, where we produce, consume and distribute goods and services, where we try to satisfy the emotional needs of individuals and so on and so forth.

It used to be that one would, upon meeting another adult ask how many kids they had; today, it is in fact far more important to ask kids how many parents they have. This is an important consideration for teachers, for family professionals who really do need to know whether the child has one or two residences, whether or not the child has siblings and, if so, whether or not those siblings have the same surnames. Recent decades of social and family change involving, among other trends, high rates of divorce and remarriage, make it impossible to safely take-it-for-granted that the adults who take on primary

financial and legal responsibilities for a child would also necessarily assume responsibility for the emotional, social or linguistic development of that child. Emotional support may be provided to one another by a child and an adult who do not live together. The socialization of children is now frequently a responsibility of adults who are not biologically related to those children. When we see a family enjoying an afternoon in a park, we do not know (as perhaps we once did) whether or not the children live together and, if so, for how many days a week; whether or not the adults are married, used to be married, are living together or are simply friends.

The proliferation of different family forms has led some to lament the decline of family and the erosion of true family values. Yet, it is wise to remember that the tradition from which these different family patterns is said to depart was a very short tradition indeed, one that could not have lasted for much more than 50 or 75 years within a quite specific period in the history of industrialized societies.

The image of the single wage-earning nuclear family isolated in suburbia invokes what is, in essence, a model of upper middle class family life in Victorian England and mistakenly assigns to it the status of an historical constant. Its applicability was limited to industrially-based societies, and even so, it served more as an aspiration than as a reality for the vast majority of the populations of such societies. Not until after the Second World War did such a life appear attainable for the working classes within which the economic contribution of women, through agricultural, industrial or informal service production, had always been a requirement. Furthermore, the return of women to the labour force did not, as we often assume, begin in the late 60s and 70s in the light of feminism. In fact, women started to return to the labour force toward the end of the 1950s essentially to pay for the college educations of their adolescent children because such higher education became a much-valued consumer commodity in the post-war years.

What is truly notable today is the proportion of YOUNG women with children who have entered or who have remained in the labour force while their children are young. Over the past twenty years, their numbers have more than doubled such that by 1986, 70.4% of married women of childbearing age were employed. Between 1976 and 1984, the proportion of women with children under the age of three who were holding jobs, rose from 32% to 52%; 57% of those with children between the ages of 3 and 5 were

holding either part-time of full-time jobs and fully 64% with children between the ages of 6 and 15 were active in the labour force. The bottom line is that it is now the majority of mothers with dependent children who hold jobs. The so-called traditional single wage-earning family is now outnumbered.

I have a number of reasons for speculating that women are in the labour force to stay.

First, there has been a dramatic change in the economics of the home. Over the past years, what was once called the "family wage" has all but disappeared. This idea, once strongly defended by the labour movement and the churches but now badly out of favour, was based on the assumption that the average industrial wage paid to male employees should be sufficient to support financially a number of dependent children and a financially-dependent spouse whose primary responsibility was the care and upbringing of children. It was upon this assumption that men, for a restricted number of years, could assert that "No wife of mine will ever have to get a job." And, it was upon this foundation of the "family wage" that the sex roles associated with it evolved. Yet, today, the average wage paid to a male employee is no longer sufficient to meet the financial needs of an equal number of dependents as was the case during the 1950's and early 1960's. Accordingly, statistics reveal that the average purchasing power of Canadian families has deteriorated in recent years and this despite the fact that, over this same period of time, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of dual wage-earning families. Today, according to the National Council of Welfare, the number of low-income families (851,000 in 1986)) would rise by 62% if the wages of women could not be relied upon to make ends meet.

Obviously, the consequences of this trend toward dual wage-earning families as statistically normal and culturally normative for those families which cannot rely on two incomes are severe. Mothers who are lone-parents and their children are 4 times more likely to be poor than are families with two parents; six in ten female headed lone-parent families live below the poverty lines or officially-designated low-income cut-offs. The female lone-parent cannot, by definition, rely upon the financial contribution of a spouse, and, as well, suffers from the generally disadvantaged economic status of women, insufficient and/or defaulted upon support payments and a lack of vocational and training opportunities, job experience and often inadequate support for the care of her children. The income differential between one-parent and two-parent families has been growing dramatically.

Societal aging will also impose pressure on all persons of so-called 'working age,' be they male or female, to participate in the labour market in order to help sustain the proportionately larger costs associated with the income, health and social security of our older citizens.

In the context of modern economies that are addicted to growth in the rates of production and consumption, suggestions that today's adults are simply greedy in insisting on two wages per family are, although quite possibly correct, fundamentally misplaced. There is within the economies of modern industrial states a systemic need for individuals to increase their appetites as consumers. The purchasing power of families is regarded by economists as a major 'engine' of economic growth and development. Thus, the modern citizen is reminded, on a monthly basis, of the number of housing starts and the levels of consumer confidence because of the importance of such factors for the 'health' of the lumber industry, the automobile industry, the manufacturing and commercial sectors of the economy. In fact, contrary to popular belief that holds that stable families are the backbone of a strong economy, separation and divorce have been, for the past twenty years, a boon to the economy. They have become, after all, one of the main reasons for what economists call household formation and when two households replace one household, we will consume an extra sofa, living room suite, microwave oven and what have you - at least until remarriage creates from this consumption the inventory for garage sales. Indeed, from a strictly economic point of view, one would now have to fear the re-emergence of stable families and the collapse of what has been labelled the "divorce industry."

Without doubt, the economic factors that have led to the commitment of women to the labour force have been complemented and reinforced by significant changes in the expectations and aspirations of men and women, especially those of young men and women. Attitude surveys and opinion polls reveal that our youth maintain, perhaps surprisingly, quite traditional values with regard to marriage and children. However, young women also indicate that they do not expect that their family commitments and child care responsibilities will necessarily occasion a significant interruption of their occupational careers. Furthermore, in what amounts to a 180 degree reversal of so-called traditional male attitudes, many young men indicate that they are not prepared to assume responsibility for a financially-dependent spouse over any prolonged period of time.

There is one further reason that I will cite that helps us to understand why both men and women must now commit themselves to the labour market. The modern state has, it seems, an ever-expanding appetite for tax dollars. Our Canadian system of taxation is based primarily upon the taxation of personal income in contrast to other possible systems of taxation that could be based on wealth, consumption or production. The state's need for an increasingly broad tax base is nothing more nor less than a need for more people with incomes to tax, a need, in short, for more employees. Not surprisingly, it is this particular fact, cynical though it may be, that proves more convincing than all the sociological, economic and ethical arguments one can muster when debating with those politicians, policy-makers and citizens who naively assume that the world would be a better place if women would just return to and stay in their kitchens. After all, it quickly becomes apparent to them that whatever problems they might have now with deficits would pale in comparison to the shortfalls they would experience if they could not rely on the taxes collected from employed women. My own crude arithmetic indicates that roughly 25% of all taxes collected on the basis of employment-related income (including wages and salaries, commissions, unemployment insurance benefits, Canada and Quebec pension plan benefits, other pensions and superannuation, business income, professional income, commission income, farming income and fishing income) is paid by women and in 1985 amounted to just under 10 billion dollars collected by the federal and provincial governments.

According to Letty Cottin Pogrebin "The essence of family is who it is, how it feels and what it does." We've talked a little about who it is and what it looks like and we've talked somewhat about what families do. Let's turn now to what it feels like.

It is my impression that today's families often live on the leftovers of human energy and commitment as their members share their tiredness more than their liveliness. Consider the material routine of the now typical young dual wage-earning family. It may be familiar to some of you.

Up early in the morning in time to get kids dressed, lunches made and kids delivered to daycare or school before mother and father must arrive at their places of employment. Then, there proceeds a regular day of busyness, meetings, phone calls, clients, assembly lines and memos before rushing to pick up the kids by a pre-arranged time so that their care givers do not charge us with breach of contract. Then, home to prepare a meal while T.V. babysits the kids. Once a week, we're off to the community college to take a course on Introduction to Microprocessing for the sake of career advancement, at least one other evening is devoted to some school or daycare advisory committee and, if we can fit it in, we try to make it to an

exercise class now and then trying to keep our bodies fit enough to pursue this pace. Baths and Homework are supervised prior to our scheduled amount of time for spousal interpersonal relating before we watch the National News which, thank God, now comes on at 10:00 p.m. because the CBC shrewdly realized that few of us can keep our eyes open past 10:30. Weekends have assumed their own schedule, often even tighter than the weekdays as we set off to Canadian Tire to purchase the insulating materials that will occupy us on Sunday before, if we can manage it, friends arrive for dinner. Those of us who are in the sandwich generation trying to assume either financial or social and emotional responsibility for our aging parents as well as our kids try to squeeze in a visit with Grandma of Grandpa on the weekend too.

As we accommodate to the demands on our time, our lives at home have started to resemble more and more the factory and the office as we try to transfer the time-management techniques of the workplace into our family lives. I understand the reasons why we need and I understand the value of family meetings and I know why family professionals tell us how important it is to make appointments with our kids and to keep those appointments and I understand why we write each other memos. I can assure you that my fridge and bulletin board look at least as messy if not more so than your own cluttered as it is by reminders of school meetings, dentist appointments, shopping lists and so on and so forth. Still, I've got to question whether or not these workplace routines that are designed to ensure optimal performance, maximum benefits over costs and efficient utilization of time don't contradict the fundamental notion of family togetherness and amount to an indictment of a culture and a society and a people that make families interact (if I can even use the word in this context) in this way. We do live in what Cheryl Russell has characterized as:

> ...the culture of the overnight express delivery, the two-hour Concorde, eyeglasses in one hour, pizza delivery in 30 minutes, 15 minutes of fame, the 10-minute lube and filter, the 1-minute news digest, or the 20 second commercial that will save your life.

It's true that, as individuals, we no longer devote 48, 44 or even 40 hours a week to our jobs. But, family members, when considered together, are now spending 60, 65 or 70 hours a week in the workforce to make ends meet. And, we have to remember that the average purchasing power of family incomes has remained static now for more than a decade at precisely the same time when that income has been generated, for the majority of families, by two wage-earners. Families, are having to work harder, some

almost twice as hard, to stay basically even with their relative level of prosperity of ten years ago. And, of course, now that households have grown more and more dependent on two incomes, it makes the situation of those families who have only one income like the single-parent family even more tenuous.

So What? So time is at a premium for today's families. What's the big deal?

In contrast to the often taken-for-granted assumption about families as static and unchanging institutions, time and the changes its brings are built into the fabric of family. As Pogrebin has suggested: "We are our dinnertimes." She goes on to ask:

> What is it? What happens between people to keep them as "close as family?" One can give a thousand different answers - common interests, shared work, trust, adventures, exchanged confidences, a sense of humour, and so on. But, underneath them all, in the purest, most profound sense, love and time are all we have. Familial friendship is embodied in the means by which love is expressed between and among us, and the way our time is spent together.

Families are, in fact, the embodiments of change. Each family has its own history, its own set of interwoven biographies. Families mature, grow old and die as the places of one generation are assumed by the members of the next. If we pay attention to all the little, mundane and even silly rituals, celebrations and traditions unique to our families, we see that what these rituals do is acknowledge change, development and growth. They illustrate the curious fact that a family is never the same from one day to the next, yet, it remains, over time, the same family. Birthdays, anniversaries, tooth fairies, Bar Mitzvahs and confirmations, piano recitals, driver's licences, graduations - all these are acknowledgments of change.Each family demarcates the passage of time by embroidering these culturally-prescribed rituals and making them their own. These family traditions become the stuff of memories, the memories of our times together and of our membership in a family. The same box of Christmas decorations gets brought out year after year. A year has passed but the box occasions in us recollections of Christmases gone by and serves to reconfirm that our lives are lives lived with others, that our experiences are shared and important to others and are part of the lives of others. The photograph albums are pulled out by the kids on a rainy day. "Was

that really what I looked like? It can't be. I couldn't have been so small." And, the parent responds, "Of course, that's you. Haven't you grown big? Still, you're my little 'pumpkin,' 'munchkin,' 'kiddo' or whatever other names of affection each family uses to affirm its special relationships.

Ironically, men and women are now spending less time in patterns of family interaction which is, according to attitude surveys, the source of their greatest satisfaction. I've already mentioned how the economy makes it difficult to devote our time to our families. But, we can't lay all the blame there. Many people used to think of family as a place that one escaped INTO from the pressures of the public worlds of commerce, industry and civic affairs. It seems to me that, today, many of us no longer seek refuge within our families but, in fact, seek refuge FROM our families, from the intimacy of our relationships, from the obligations and responsibilities that they entail. We withdraw into our workaholism, into excessively individualized leisure time pursuits and into television that ironically finds its way into the FAMILY ROOM. Picture in your minds the patterns of interaction and human communication among family members as they are lined up watching the tube. "Shush!" "Pass the popcorn!" "Stop hitting your brother (because) I can't hear the television." "Can't we watch something else."

As Urie Bronfenbrenner has observed:

> The primary danger of the television screen lies not so much in the behaviour it produces as the behaviour it prevents - the talks, the games, the family festivities and arguments, through which much of the child's learning takes place and his (or her) character is formed.

It has become difficult to coordinate our roles and responsibilities as workers, as family members, as neighbours and citizens. There is a logic, a pattern, that we can discern from among the interwoven patterns of economic, social, demographic and cultural change that impinge upon families today. In contrast to traditional societies in which the members of families achieved whatever minimal degrees of material well-being and security BECAUSE they were members of a family, today, one's economic well-being is achieved IN SPITE OF family responsibilities and commitments. We are employed as individuals, not as family members. There is a stigma attached to those who bring their family concerns into the workplace too obviously or too frequently and it is, by and large, women who suffer most the consequences of these attitudes. I have been told, for instance, that personnel managers have begun to quantify the decline in productivity on the part of female workers at 3:30 p.m. when

their preoccupations shift from those of the job to questions like: "Is there anything out of the freezer for dinner tonight." and "How am I going to pick up the kids from daycare in time if this meeting goes on much longer?"

If it is the father who is called by the school nurse too frequently to come and collect a sick child, it is a pretty sound indication that he is not on the Yuppie fast track to success. Believe it or not, secretarial schools still advise their graduates to hide their marriage plans from prospective employers recognizing that candour in this regard might well jeopardize their chances for labour force entry

In the world of public affairs, despite how important we say that family is to us, we know that our identity and our status and our security is no longer tied to our membership in elementary structures of kinship. Industrially-based societies have been organized around the central place they accord to employment. The way I am introduced to you in this kind of gathering defines me by reference to my job. In traditional societies, it would have been far more important for you to know me as the son of Glenn Glossop who was himself the son of a butcher in Huntsville, Ontario, a member of such a such a parish and so on and so forth.

James Ramey once remarked that:

> For the first time, the family is no longer the basic unit of society, having been replaced by the individual.

We have succeeded, perhaps all too well, in what Philip Slater once called our "pursuit of loneliness." And, yet, most people, most members of families still refuse to think of their family commitments and obligations as superfluous.

Ironically, now that we have managed to create an economy and a society in which families are no longer central, the idea of family is being rediscovered at the end of this 20th century. In fact, we have been told that the gauntlet has been thrown down and that a 'war over the family' is now being waged with economists, academics, feminists, so-called REAL Women, bureaucrats, political rightists and leftists encamped on the battlefield.

It is not merely coincidental that the significance of family is being rediscovered at a time when industrial economies throughout the western world have been experiencing serious contraction and we face an increasingly competitive international economic order. Until quite recently, we had allowed ourselves to believe that the 'modern' family had evolved into a

specialized unit of emotional and psychological commitment sustained principally by love, affection and the prospect of good sex. We naively forgot that families have always been and are still economically significant. The relationships of men and women have always been based, in part, on economic interdependence and too often on dependence and exploitation. As two wages become increasingly required to sustain a family, this relationship becomes more obvious but it was always there. For example, child care, whether it is done for wages or apparently for free is an economically productive and vital form of work that sustains a society. We are kidding ourselves if we think we can get out of the present child care crisis' cheaply. You can pay men enough to support economically productive but financially dependent wives to care for children, or you can pay women enough to support househusbands (I have no particular preference) or you can pay friends, relatives or professionals to care for children but, as a society, we cannot escape from the necessity of this most vital investment.

After years of relative neglect, the modern state has begun to rediscover <u>the family</u> as a potential agent of health promotion, provider of care for the aged, sick and disabled, as the principal loci of attitudinal and behaviourial change and as the first source of economic and financial support for its members. Regrettably, there is all too often a romanticized and unrealistic image of the family that permeates these suggestions that it is the family that will deliver us from the contradictions of the modern welfare state by picking up the pieces and doing again, for free, what families used to do thirty years ago. Who, one must ask, is at home anyl onger to care for the sick and the old? When 50% of the population changes residence once every five years such that we have actually come to believe that a phone call is the next best thing to being there, how can we provide any genuine support to the dispersed members of our families and communities?

If, indeed, we are to make a place for families in the future, we will have to devote ourselves to a fundamental and likely critical assessment of patterns of economic development that require such high rates of geographical mobility, of patterns of income distribution that severely marginalize anyone who is not active in the labour force, of policies and programs that condemn more than one million children to live in poverty and, of patterns of work and employment that are, by and large, insensitive to the family responsibilities of employees.

As we take up the challenges of the next century, we shall commit ourselves (perhaps first and foremost) to our own families which, for better or worse, are the mediums in which we grow to

become who we are. We will commit ourselves, as well, to recognizing and respecting the diversity of family forms and being sensitive to the uniqueness and particular circumstances of the families which we seek to help and support.

We will commit ourselves to working to strengthen the immediate social networks of self-help groups and community supports that influence dramatically the dynamics of family interaction. We will commit ourselves to working together not only to help parents and children to better accommodate to the circumstances in which they find themselves but, also, to alter those circumstances. We may find ourselves having to respond to the incidence of childhood poverty or to tax reform proposals that fail to acknowledge the important contribution that families make to this society. We may, find that we have to say something about Sunday openings, housing, income security programs and so on. We will recognize not only the need to respond as individuals to the changes that surround us, but as well to work together to meet the challenges of the next century and to make the changes that will be necessary if families are to be accorded tangible recognition and support for the work they do on behalf of their members and on behalf of us all rather than mere rhetorical endorsements.

I thank you for the opportunity to join you here in your work and to partake of the commitment to Canada's families that your discipline has always demonstrated. Happy Anniversary.